

IMPACTS OF GEN AI ON REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

This whitepaper explores the impact of ChatGPT on online reputation management (ORM) and content marketing, focusing on its potential to influence public perception through its AI-driven content generation.

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PERCEPTO

AI Is Not a Thing of the Future

No longer a feature on the world's favorite sci-fi stories or a concept in forward thinking theoretical paper. It's here. It's now. And it's dramatically changing the way we live and work.

The study by Percepto investigates how Chat GPT sources information vs where those sources appear on Google, and the implications this has on shaping narratives for high-profile individuals in the finance industry. Through a structured research methodology, we analyzed the sentiment, platform type, and Google rankings of sources used by Chat GPT, revealing a strong preference for company websites, professional profiles, and news outlets.

Findings indicate that although the majority of sources are neutral or positive, the potential for negative content to shape reputation still exists, especially when more negative queries are posed. Additionally, the research suggests that controlled assets, such as company websites and professional profiles, are crucial for effective reputation management. Further investigation into other industries and search engines like Bing is recommended for a broader understanding.

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Discovery Creates the Quest for Answers

Since its launch in November 2022, Chat GPT has become increasingly popular for use, not only as a content creation tool, but as a tool for research.

Over the past 18 months, Percepto has been monitoring ChatGPT in relation to clients' reputations, and how they could potentially be affected by ChatGPT's research mechanism. We began to delve into its use and functionality in relation to our own online reputation management and content marketing activity, factoring in its potential as a strategic resource.

Where asking a question on a search engine produces various pieces of information from a multitude of links, ChatGPT creates a paragraph of description sourced from information found on search engines. When considering client narrative, this leads to a very specific outcome, rather than a list of potential results which could be looked into further - thus creating a very definitive perception of a brand if further investigation is not made.

This created an interesting dichotomy from a communications and reputation management perspective. While we, as digital communications professionals, strive to build and maintain appropriate and positive narratives across Google and other search engines, ChatGPT – quickly becoming a 'go-to' research tool – could potentially throw a proverbial spanner in the works. Theoretically, the algorithm could choose a less than desirable online platform or outlet, from which to source information for its delivered paragraph.

We initially tried this with a client, asking ChatGPT the question, "Who is Client X?".

Interestingly, after the reputation management strategy had been put into place, the information delivered sourced from new controlled assets which Percepto had recently created, and which had ranked on the first page for the client's name on Google.

This revelation led to more questions on the subject; namely:

1

What kinds of platforms are favored as sources?

2

Does better Google positioning of sources correlate with higher likelihood of those sources being used by ChatGPT?

3

Does ChatGPT specifically seek out positive or negative sentiment, or indeed both?

4

Which sections of Google produce similar results to those used as sources by ChatGPT - Search, News, etc.?

To discover the answer to these questions, the team at Percepto decided to embark upon further research, which has led to the creation of this whitepaper.

Key Findings:

SEO Matters:

Half of all links sourced by ChatGPT also appeared on the first five pages of Google results, with 88% of those appearing on the first page (first 10 results) suggesting that good SEO from a personal branding point of view is vital to inform both Google and ChatGPT.

Company and Personal Websites Are Vital:

Company Websites were the most prevalent platform type for information to be drawn upon as a source for ChatGPT and also often ranked highly on Google. Personal Websites were low in number overall because many of the subjects did not have one - for those individuals who did, they were used 100% of the time.

Negativity is News Heavy:

Confirmation bias is definitely an issue - and when questions are skewed with a more negative tone, ChatGPT seems to target the news outlets for its information as opposed to controlled assets.



Existing Research and Where We Filled the Gap

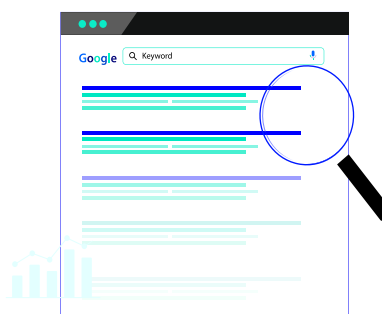
Many institutions and organizations have conducted research around ChatGPT. since its inception in 2022 to try to understand functionality, usage, usefulness and reliability.

The article [Will ChatGPT Change How Search Engines Work?](#) by Jigar Arrgawal of Yay Commerce!, discusses the potential for ChatGPT to revolutionize search engines by offering more relevant, context-aware, and user-friendly search results. Challenges, such as the need for extensive training data, difficulty in understanding natural language, and integration issues could, however, hinder its widespread adoption. It concludes that, while promising, ChatGPT's impact on search engine optimization (SEO) and user experience is still evolving.

The Study, [ChatGPT vs. Google: A Comparative Study of Search Performance and User Experience](#) conducted by Ruiyun (Rayna) Xu (Farmer School of Business, Miami University) , Yue (Katherine) Feng (Hong Kong Polytechnic University), and Hailiang Chen (University of Hong Kong) compares the performance and user experience of ChatGPT versus Google Search. It finds that ChatGPT provides higher user satisfaction, especially for straightforward queries, but may cause overreliance and spread misinformation. ChatGPT offers consistent performance across different education levels, while Google excels in fact-checking tasks. Both tools are perceived as trustworthy, but ChatGPT is seen as delivering higher information quality.

Shahan Ali Memo and Jevin West (University of Washington, Seattle), in their research paper [Search Engines Post-ChatGPT: How Generative Artificial Intelligence Could Make Search Less Reliable](#) examine the integration of GenAI into search engines, highlighting early challenges such as factual inconsistencies and biases. They argue that GenAI-generated content, while often perceived as credible, can decrease transparency and harm the reliability of search engines by blurring the origins of information and leading to error-filled responses. These factors may undermine the integrity of the information ecosystem.

However, no study paper or article has been conducted to discuss the potential relationship between ChatGPT and Google specifically. In our research, we looked for the correlation between the two. We searched for an understanding of whether a page which has prevalence or authority on Google is more likely to be sourced by ChatGPT to collate information for its description / answers.



The Current Situation

Goal of the Research

Through our research we hoped to discover more about the direct relationship between Google and ChatGPT and their algorithms. We will be looking for patterns to determine whether there is a correlation between leading sources and examining the potential effect that reputation management could have on the end results of ChatGPT.

To do this, we decided it was necessary to look deeper into the sources which were used to create the result descriptions when a question about a person was posed on the platform, and determine what the Open AI algorithm favored according to position, sentiment, tone and type.

This information would help to inform us of what kind of future reputation management and communications activity could affect Google results and, in turn, make the necessary impact on ChatGPT results.

Our Hypotheses

After our initial research and from anecdotal evidence, we hypothesized that the majority of sources used would be from personal and company websites, where a profile or biography of the person was prevalent a number of times.

We predicted that this would mean the link would therefore rank in the top two or three pages on Google, for the individual's name mentioned in the question.

We also hypothesized that ChatGPT would potentially try to balance the search with sources with both a positive and negative sentiment.

For example:

If

...profiles on professional platforms were often cited on Chat GPT, this would need to be completed.

...news outlets were more popular for citation, media relations should be used effectively within the communications strategy.

...positioning was important, the strongest possible website should be favored in terms of outreach or collaboration.

Methodology to Our Madness



Demographics

A list of 30 high profile individuals was selected from the Spear's 500 platform, including leaders from across the finance industry - from various sectors including – but not limited to – wealth management, banking, venture capital, and private equity.

Regionally, the selected individuals were spread across the UK (31%), Europe (41%), MENA (14%) and Asia (14%).

It should be noted that this study was conducted specifically for these demographics within this industry and other sectors or industries could potentially produce different results.



Questions

To determine potential confirmation bias, three questions were posed to Chat GPT with increments of suggested negativity. Namely:

1

Completely Neutral:

Who is *[individual's name]*?

2

Suggested Negativity:

What did *[individual's name]* do?

3

Clear Negativity:

What is controversial about
[individual's name]?



Methodology

The aforementioned questions were entered into ChatGPT according to each of the individual's names chosen for the study. When the descriptions are produced, details were recorded: overall sentiment of the description and the links from which the information was sourced.

The same questions were then entered into Google. To compare results, the team searched for the links which were referenced as sources to determine certain details which were then recorded for analysis. Those details were:

- Their specific position on the Search within the first five pages of Google results
- Their overall sentiment
- Their position on the News section
- The type of platform they were; ie. news outlet, professional profile, business website, blog etc.

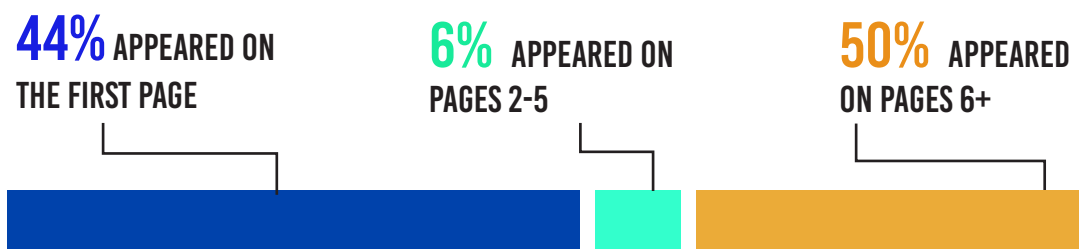
Results: What We Found Out

Positioning

Interestingly, only 50% of the links that were used as sources appeared on the top five pages (and therefore within the first 50 positions) when the same question was posed on Google. This is not what we had predicted, hypothesizing that a larger percentage would appear in the first few pages.

However, 44% of the links appeared on the first page (top 10 positions) and only 6% on pages two to five, thus suggesting that rigorous SEO activity can have significant impact on ChatGPT's algorithm, as much as it does on Google.

In terms of results with a negative sentiment, 90% of them were not positioned in the first five pages of Google - therefore, if using ChatGPT this information may be seen, but if using Google, it is unlikely that the average searcher would come across them.



Graph(i) - Sources SERP Positioning

Sentiment

Overall, 55% of the results used as sources were neutral in their sentiment, with 40% positive and only 5% negative.



Graph(ii) - Overall Sentiment of Sources

These results varied according to the nature of the question as hypothesized, which the more leading and negative the question garnering slightly more neutral and negative links, as would be expected. This is a sign that confirmation bias is prevalent and should be taken into consideration throughout reputation management strategy to combat this.

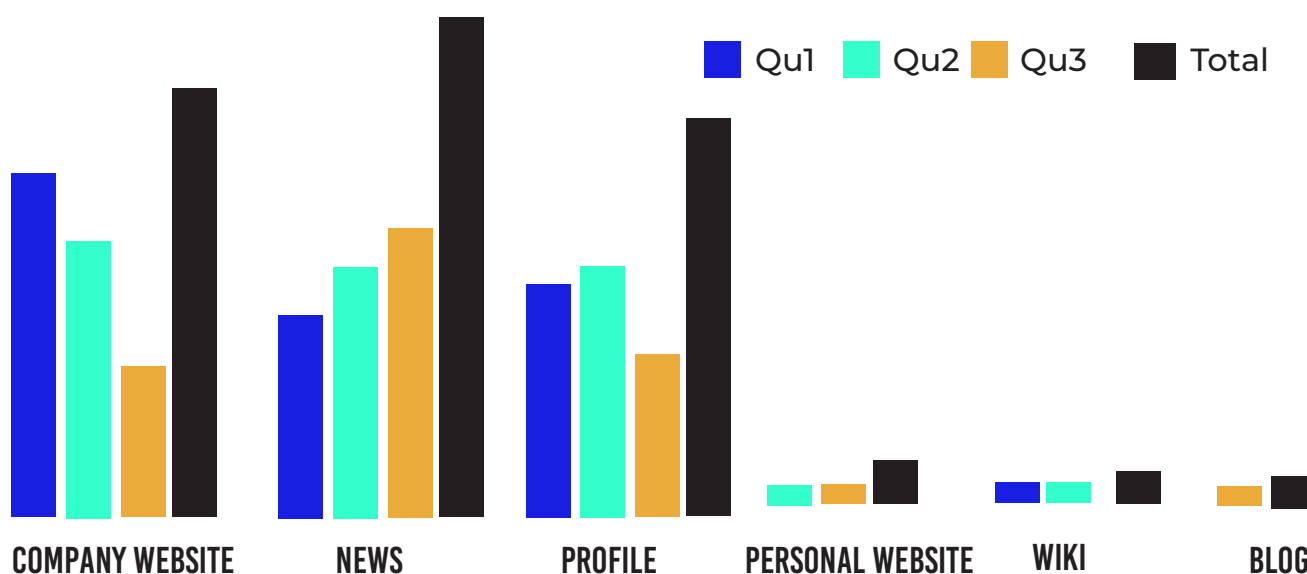
Platform Type

News outlets were the largest source of results for Chat GPT, becoming more prevalent as the questions became more leading towards the negative. They accounted for 52% of Qu3 results (the most negative) and 37% of total results. This highlights the importance of media relations as part of reputation management strategy and the need to target outlets which may already have negative links as Chat GPT is more likely to source from news when a negative-leaning question is presented.

Company Websites were the most prevalent on platform type and appeared at least once in nearly every Chat GPT search - especially in the case of Qu1 where 42% of all results were sourced from a Company Website. In total, nearly a third (30%) of all results came from a Company Website.

The third most used platform type is Professional Profiles (such as Crunchbase, Spears500, etc.) with approximately 30% for each question's results and 30% of the total overall.

making up 63% of all results. Noticeably, ChatGPT doesn't seem to use more complex platforms to source information such as social media posts. Blogs are used less and are, with relation to ChatGPT, less necessary for ORM.



Graph(iii) - Platform Types Used as Sources

The results confirm some of our hypotheses. We hypothesized that Company Websites would be the most prevalent, which was indeed the case for the more neutral questions (Qu1 and Qu2). Overall, however, news outlets were most prominent which we understand to be due to their high readership, strong authority and therefore high credibility - this was not as predicted.

One prediction we had was that Personal Websites would feature more highly, yet numbers were noticeably small (only 3% of all results). However, on closer inspection, we discovered that almost none of the chosen individuals who were part of the study had personal websites. For those who did, however, their personal websites were used as a source on ChatGPT 100% of the time.

These results suggest that controlled assets such as personal websites, company websites and professional profiles are important to secure for reputation management activity making up 63% of all results. Noticeably, ChatGPT doesn't seem to use more complex platforms to source information such as social media posts. Blogs are used less and are, with relation to ChatGPT, less necessary for ORM.

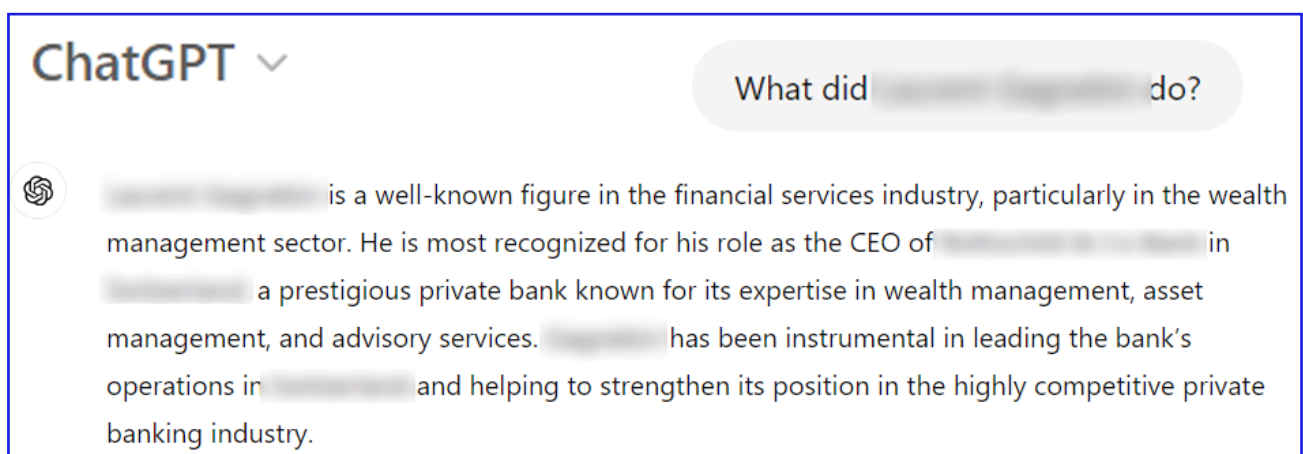
Potential Further Research:

Research into the individuals chosen was not conducted prior to this study and therefore for some of these individuals there is no negative information online. This potentially produces different results than if the study was conducted with only those who had known negative links when searching for their name - further research should be conducted to confirm.

Although it is utilized less than Google, the search engine to which ChatGPT is known to be connected and the platform from which it sources information is Bing. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study on Bing to compare results.

This whitepaper was focussed specifically on the finance industry with individuals chosen specifically who worked within this sphere. Results could vary for other business sectors and further research to compare to this study could be interesting.

Finally, this initial research was based on the idea of a general search without significant probing. Prompts on ChatGPT were generic and broad. Were there to be a more probing question, perhaps more specific in nature (e.g. surrounding due diligence or allegations of fraud etc.) results produced could also be interesting.



Evolving Reputation Management for a New Future

With the fast arrival of 2025 and the Fourth Industrial Revolution in full swing, we're at the forefront of the Gen AI Reputation Management sphere

Our research highlights the evolving relationship between ChatGPT and Google in the realm of online reputation management. While ChatGPT is a valuable tool for generating comprehensive, digestible information, the fact that many of its sources hold significant authority on Google underscores the importance of maintaining a robust digital footprint across high-ranking platforms.

The study confirms that company websites, professional profiles, and news outlets are key contributors to the AI's generated content, particularly in response to neutral or moderately negative queries. However, contrary to our hypothesis, only half of the sources used appeared within the top five pages of Google, suggesting that factors beyond search engine rank also play a role in what ChatGPT prioritizes.

The implications for reputation management are clear: businesses and individuals must strategically curate their online assets to ensure that accurate and favorable information is prioritized in both search engines and AI-driven tools like ChatGPT.

Moving forward, deeper research into other search engines, specific industries, and more detailed question prompts will help broaden our understanding of how to influence AI-generated content for reputation management purposes. The future of ORM will increasingly require a dual approach—balancing efforts across traditional search engines and AI platforms.



**Is *your* reputation going to
withstand the changes we face?**

About Percepto

Percepto has been managing the digital presence of companies, high-profile individuals and business leaders internationally since 2007, maintaining their strong, positive, online image and securing brand position.

A group of innovative thinkers, digital strategists, and storytellers, Percepto helps companies, C-suites, and business leaders maximize their online presence, promote their key messages and deal with reputational challenges.

Becoming an integral part of clients' extended teams, Percepto uses knowledge and breadth of experience to implement strategic solutions and produce tangible results, promoting key messaging, protecting reputation and engaging with stakeholders, through sharp, effective and strategic implementation.